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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [MASS](#) [ELTN](#) [ETRD](#) [TU](#) [IZ](#)

SUBJECT: SCENESETTER FOR AMBASSADOR RICHARD JONES' VISIT TO ANKARA

REF: A. ANKARA 1484

[B](#). ANKARA 242

[C](#). ANKARA 47

[D](#). BAGHDAD 1173

[E](#). ANKARA 1230

[F](#). ANKARA 1263

Classified By: Ambassador Eric S. Edelman for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

Summary

[1](#). (C) Turkey's leadership is trying to take a more positive attitude toward both the United States and Iraq. This has resulted both from policymakers' understanding that they need to stand up more for the relationship and from the realization that Turkey has more to gain by supporting Iraq's democratization process than by its previous negative approach. Your visit is therefore an opportunity to push the Turks to support the new Iraq in both the political and economic arenas. End summary.

Turks Take a Fresh Look at Iraq Policy

[2](#). (C) You will be visiting Ankara at a time when the Turkish leadership is trying to forge a more positive policy toward Iraq. We are now observing a change in Turkey's current attitude toward Iraq and toward our policy there. One reason for this is that the Iraqi election results convinced the Turks that they have pursued a losing strategy. They have realized that their hyper-critical approach to events in Iraq has not been effective. Turkey spent the weeks leading up to the election fuming about mass movements of Kurds into Kirkuk, alleged intimidation and disenfranchisement of the Iraqi Turkmen, and low Sunni Arab turnout. This culminated with PM Erdogan characterizing the elections as "undemocratic," and official GOT statements about the elections were lukewarm at best, prominently highlighting Turkish concerns while failing to praise the Iraqi people for taking their country back after so many years of dictatorship.

[3](#). (C) Another reason for this change in approach was a series of senior U.S. visitors to Turkey, culminating with the Secretary Feb. 5-6. The Secretary and the other visitors sought Turkish support on Iraq, but also sent the message that Turkey's leaders need to stand up for the relationship with the U.S. (For further analysis of the Turkish policy shift, please see ref a). These visits helped the Turks start to believe one of their own talking points: "Your success in Iraq is our success."

[4](#). (C) Despite their unhappiness with the poor showing of the Ankara-supported Iraqi Turkmen Front (ITF), the Turks are trying to support Iraq's nascent democracy and to approach the country as a whole, not just as a series of northern Iraq-related problems, such as federalism-cum-Kurdish independence, Kirkuk, PKK/Kongra-Gel, or the fate of the Turkmen. Ankara has offered courses in Turkey for military leaders under NTM-I, permits sustenance and humanitarian goods to flow across the border, allows the use of Incirlik Air Base to stage tanker aircraft that support OIF, will continue to offer expertise to Iraq's political parties, and is seeking a broad dialogue with leaders from across Iraq's political spectrum.

Election Helps Turn the Turks Around

[5](#). (C) The election results served as a bucket of cold water for Turkish policymakers. Those who confidently asserted that the Turkmen make up 20 or even 30 percent of the Iraqi population (and mysteriously still assert this) were stunned by the ITF's poor performance: 93,000 votes nationwide (or about one percent); 73,000 votes in Kirkuk province, good for control of only eight of the 41 governorate council seats. In a striking shift, both PM Erdogan and FonMin Gul quickly turned on the ITF, accusing its leaders of running a poor campaign. Your counterpart, GOT Special Envoy for Iraq Osman Koruturk (who strongly influences the civilians' policy on Iraq), told the Ambassador March 21 that Turkey is sending a new message to the ITF and other Turkmen (though Ankara's

influence on non-ITF Turkmen is questionable): You must work within the Iraqi political process, and do not rely on Ankara for support. However, with resurgent nationalist sentiment in Turkey and ten years of public statements decrying the lot of Iraqi Turkmen (at the hands of the Kurds) this will remain a political hot button issue.

16. (S) The Turkmen and Kirkuk have been contentious since before March 2003. The ITF resisted joining the opposition squarely. There were repeated accusations at the collaboration with Saddam against our cooperation with the opposition. When no ITF member was included in the IGC, there were exaggerated reports of Turks handing out weapons and plotting destabilization, culminating in our July 4, 2004 arrest of Turkish soldiers in Suleimaniyah--an event that continues to weigh on the Turkish consciousness. The ITF has not played comfortably in the new Iraq, and the reports of Turks arming Turkmen continue to flow--mostly from Kurdish sources. Given Turkish behavior, and particularly military Special Forces attitudes, such reports could be credible. A respected role for Turkmen in the new Iraqi government will be important for some parts of the Turkish government and public. Despite the policy shift, you can still expect to hear moans if the ITG doesn't have any Turkmen ministers or only one in an inconsequential position.

Hope for Kurdish-Shia Balance

17. (C) Turkey has a long, complex, and usually negative relationship with Iraq's Kurds. For the past several years, the GOT has generally preferred PUK leader Jalal Talabani over the KDP's Masoud Barzani; the latter's statements on Kirkuk and Kurdish aspirations for independence tend to infuriate the Turks, and GOT officials consistently tell us that KDP/KRG border officials harass Turkish truck drivers coming over the Habur Gate and extract extra fees and fines from them. Indeed, the Turks privately, but explicitly, tell us that the KDP is the main reason they insist that a second border gate be placed at Ovakoy, on the far western side of the border that would allow Turkish truckers to largely avoid KDP-land. (NOTE: The new road that would be required from Ovakoy on the Iraqi side would almost have to lead to Talafar, a town in Ninewah province with a considerable Turkmen population: this also a large factor in the Turks' thinking. END NOTE.)

18. (C) While the Turks have occasionally expressed concern that the Kurds may have too much influence in the new ITG, they are generally pleased that--at least in the current stage of ITG negotiations--Talabani looks to be the likely candidate for President of Iraq. The Turks have calculated that a major Kurdish role in the new government will temper calls for Kurdish independence. At the same time, Turkey hopes that the Iraqi Shia will push back hard on Kurdish aspirations for Kirkuk, including pulling the province into the KRA. The Turks are concerned that the Kurds could eventually use oil-rich Kirkuk as the political and economic center for an independent Kurdish state. Turkish concern for Kirkuk's Turkmen population is a secondary consideration, but useful for appealing to Turkish public opinion.

19. (C) While Turkey is counting on the Iraqi Shia to counterbalance Kurdish aspirations, the Turks are also counting on the Kurds to limit possible List 169 intentions for an Islamist regime in Baghdad that might also be too close to Tehran. Turks have told us that one of their greatest concerns for Iraq is not Kurdish independence but a second Islamist theocracy which would disturb the long-standing balance of power between Turkey and Iran. The moderate Islamist leanings of Turkey's ruling AK Party aside, the Turks back Kurdish desires to keep Sharia out of the Iraqi constitution and for the Iraqi state to be chiefly secular. (NOTE: Turkish anti-Shia bias--especially prominent in some elements of the ruling AK Party--also plays a role. END NOTE.)

Old Issues Never Die:

110. (C) While we believe Turkey is seeking to look at Iraq as a real country and not just a collection of problems, some specific issues will likely still dominate the Turks' agenda with you. In addition, negative developments in Iraq--injudicious statements by the Kurds on Kirkuk or Kurdish independence, new allegations of oppression of the Turkmen, an uptick in PKK attacks in Turkey (a normal occurrence in the spring), or a major CF anti-insurgent operation a la al-Fajr--could each by themselves stir up negative press in Turkey and challenge Turkey's leaders to depart from their current, wiser course and instead pander to public opinion.

PKK...

11. (S) Aside from Kirkuk and the Kurdish independence issue, the Turks are still upset by PKK/Kongra-Gel's continued presence in northern Iraq. Turkish government and military leaders understand that responsibility for dealing with terrorists within Iraq's borders will increasingly pass to the Iraqis, and their agreement to host the January 2005 trilateral PKK talks was a positive sign that they will work together with the Iraqis on this shared problem. Still, they, and the public at large, remain bitter over their perception that the US has taken no steps in Iraq to fulfill President Bush's pledge that that country will no longer be a base for terrorist operations against Turkey and they expect the US to remain engaged in the effort. Some in the Turkish military harbor the belief that the US acquiesces to (or supports) the PKK's presence in Iraq, continually citing unsubstantiated reports of US/PKK meetings. (NOTE: We also know that the military uses our lack of action against PKK/Kongra-Gel to needle the current AKP Government. END NOTE.)

12. (S) If confronted with this issue, you should remind the Turks about our long-standing efforts that make us Turkey's number one ally against the PKK: Our listing of the PKK and all successor groups as terrorist organizations; our successful campaign to get the EU to do the same; and our assistance in rendering PKK leader Abdullah Ocalan. You should refer back to the trilateral talks where, with the US role in Iraq more one of facilitator, the Turks and Iraqis focused on concrete steps to pave the way for actions against the PKK, including establishing an intelligence-sharing mechanism and holding a legal experts meeting after the ITG is in place to discuss issues related to closure of PKK front offices and media outlets in northern Iraq and the extradition of known PKK terrorists who are arrested (ref b). MNF-I is in the process of posting a Tier I list of PKK terrorists on CENTCOM's CENTRIX system (to which all coalition countries, including the Turks, have access) which will facilitate CG's holding PKK leaders who come into their custody. This is a small but an important step by MNF-I and, once executed, should be appreciated by the Turks.

... and Trucker Security

13. (C) While the security situation continues to improve, the safety of Turkish truck drivers and other workers in Iraq remains a concern for the GOT. Insurgents have murdered at least 80 Turks; about 25 others have been kidnapped but most of these have been released. On Dec. 17 of last year, Iraqi insurgents murdered five Turkish police officers as they were driving to Baghdad to provide security for the Turkish embassy there. This incident shocked the nation; President Sezer, PM Erdogan, the CHOD, and many other notables attended the officers' funeral. U.S., Iraqi, and Turkish officials participated in a trilateral discussion on trucker security on Nov. 30 that helped us demonstrate the significant steps we have taken to protect Turks delivering supplies for the MNF-I and clarify that almost all of the truck drivers killed were not/not in CF-protected convoys. The meeting also initiated productive Turkish-Iraqi cooperation on security, including a bilateral follow-up meeting Dec. 29-30 (ref c). We expect to convene another trilateral trucker security meeting once the ITG has formed.

What the Turks Can Do: Political Support...

14. (C) You should engage the Turks to make their inclination to be helpful on Iraq more concrete. On the political side, the Turks should continue to work with parties all along the political and communal spectrum, as they have committed to us they will do as Iraqis prepare for another round of elections during 2005. In particular, the Turks can engage Sunni Arabs as a complement to our own outreach efforts. The Turks have told us that Sunnis have pointed to the continuing detention of certain clerics and other notables as a continuing irritant in their own effort to breach the divide between us.

15. (C) In addition, the Turks should be flexible and open in providing training opportunities for Iraqi Security Forces, Iraqi police, and civilians. The Turks have provided training for some Iraqi diplomats, and they have offered training courses for officers and NCOs under NTM-I (though the Iraqis have yet to avail this offer). A Turkish plan to provide police training to Iraqis in Jordan was never funded, and now the Turks have said they would prefer to provide this training in Turkey, not in Jordan. We are mindful of Embassy Baghdad's reporting (ref d) that, for budgetary and timing reasons, the Iraqis would prefer to get such training in Iraq or failing this, in Jordan or the Gulf States (this might become less cumbersome should commercial air traffic open up between Iraq and Turkey). The Turks have a small presence in Iraq on the NTM-I staff (two, soon to become five), but they are providing logistical and administrative support only; they are not trainers. It might be worth sounding out the Turks to see if they would consider sending additional

personnel--trainers--to Iraq under NTM-I or even bilaterally.

...Second Border Gate...

16. (C) You should remind Turkish officials of our support for a second border crossing with Iraq, emphasizing that the decision on the border is a bilateral decision for Turkey and Iraq. We offered to fund a TDA study to help the two sides reach agreement. However, the U.S. is not involved in the negotiations.

17. (C) The single border crossing with Iraq is a bottleneck for coalition supplies. The long lines at the border are a political irritant for the GOT and threaten to limit what Turkish officials expect will be a very profitable trade with Iraq. The GOT has so far not accepted our offer to fund a TDA study of the border options, insisting that the second border gate must be constructed according to the Turkish proposal, which would include building roads from the border and near Talafar. That said, MFA Under Secretary Tuygan recently told the Ambassador that he will "look into" the Turks' restrictive approach to the TDA study. The Foreign Ministry considers KDP leader Masoud Barzani the principle obstacle to agreement and told us that they might offer him compensation in return for agreement on Turkish proposal for the second border crossing. Some Turkish officials think that the U.S. could compel Iraq and/or Barzani to accept the Turkish proposal.

18. (C) In an effort to reduce the effect of the border bottleneck on MNF-I sustainment operations, EUCOM is considering placing a temporary pipeline for JP-8 across the Habur river, thus eliminating the long delay for trucks crossing the Turkey-Iraq border. We advised EUCOM that the proposal would require approval from the Turkish government and recommended that a commercial arrangement (using DESC's Turkish contractor Petrol Ofisi) might help expedite approval. We have not heard back from EUCOM.

...and Support for the Economic Relationship

19. (SBU) You could also encourage Turkish leadership to promote dialogue on the sensitive issue of the Tigris-Euphrates Basin. Foreign Ministry officials are sensitive about this issue after decades of angry rhetoric from Iraq and Syria, but tell us they are ready to begin confidence-building measures that could lead to future cooperation. The U.S. could facilitate cooperation with projects to train experts or help create a shared database (ref e).

20. (SBU) Turkey has spent only a small amount of its U.S.\$ 50 million pledge to Iraqi reconstruction, citing the security situation there. On March 7, Turkey's Coordinator for Iraq Reconstruction told us Turkey hoped to begin reconstruction projects in Iraq after the new Iraqi Government is working, though it still remains concerned about the security situation (ref f). With MNF-I statistics showing a clear decline in insurgent attacks, you could encourage the Turks to begin some useful projects, while recognizing that terrorists continue to kill Turkish truckers (albeit at a slower pace than mid-to-late 2004), and the Dec. 17 murders in Mosul are still fresh in the Turks' minds.

Incirlik? Don't Ask

21. (S) We have used Incirlik Air Base (IAB) to base tanker aircraft that support both OIF and OEF. In 2004, we also rotated troops out of Iraq via the base. Since then, however, the GOT has been reluctant to approve Iraq-related operations at IAB, such as a long-standing request to establish a logistics hub there. It has become clear that the AK Party Government believes it can utilize our increased use at Incirlik as leverage on other issues. We aren't playing that game and we recommend, therefore, that you not raise the use of the base in your discussions here.

22. (U) Iraq posts minimize considered.
EDELMAN